



A STUDY ON RELEVANCE OF MAHATMA GANDHI IN 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

Mahatma Gandhi after almost 70 years of martyrdom is now more relevant on global level than before. as a , Father of the nation, Champion of truth and nonviolence, great leader of action, What is needed at the hour is to implement his deeds, actions and thoughts into practice and thus, his relevance in different fields is unquestionable and unchallengeable. we shall survive together or if we fail in our venture, we are bound to perish together. He is the only hope of the future as he is the only Shining Star on the Horizon. Many thinkers and a host of others are innovatively using and advocating Gandhian ideals like Satyagraha, alternative to violence, Sarvodaya alternative to Social exclusion. Anthyodaya alternative to Socio-Economic upliftment, GramSwaraj alternative to Centralisation of powers, NaiTaleem (Basic education) alternative to Western education. Model village, Trusteeship, Sustainable development, to address the challenges of changing world.

KEYWORDS: Satyagraha, Rural Development, Educationalist, Emancipation, Sustainable Development.

INTRODUCTION

My Life is my message.

M.K. Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi is venerated as the leader of the freedom movement of India and he is credited with the emancipation of India from the British rule. Mahatma Gandhi lived a completely versatile life. There is not a single field of human activity which was left un-touched by him, such as politics, religion and ethics, journalism and education. As a man action, Political saint, Practical Idealist, as a way of life, Ray of hope, Volcano of truth and non-violence and as a source of Inspiration, his thoughts and action are significant, relevant and urgently needed for addressing problems of the twenty- first century.

GANDHI: SOCIAL REFORMS

“Social reforms are never carried out by the weakness of strong; but always by the strength of the weak”

The Gandhian ethic of social reconstruction is more relevant than ever because it represents an act of self-transformation for humanity, not the illusory dream of a political leader. Gandhi wanted to change the values that govern socio- political and economic action in human society. Gandhi believed that decentralised politics and an egalitarian economy worked better at the micro-community level, where citizens can act in relationships of mutuality and reciprocity.

Contemporary society is a complex whole that is neither value-based nor purely speculative. Tradition and authority, once revered, are now completely disregarded. All of humanity is guided by jealousy, distrust, suspicion and hatred. Violence, poverty and intolerance are on the rise. The external homogeneity brought by science and civilization does not correspond to the inner unity of our souls. So there is an urgent need to reform our minds. He says that adherence to truthfulness should be our only purpose of existence. The ultimate goal of the individual is the realisation of truth and justice through consistent efforts, not only for ourselves but for all humanity.

GANDHI: RURAL DEVELOPMENT

'India lives in its villages'

The ideal village: There is enough in the world to satisfy the needs of all, but there isn't enough to satisfy the greed of all. The village is the basic unit of the Gandhian ideal social order. "If the village perishes, India too will perish. We have to choose between the India of villages, which is as old as they are, and the India of cities, which is a creation of foreign domination. Gandhi's ideal village should be a federation of self-governing autonomous republics. The role of the central authority will be only to coordinate the work of the various village republics and to oversee and manage things of common interest such as education, basic industries, health, currency, banking, and so on. The central authority will have no power to enforce its decisions on the village republics except through moral pressure or persuasion.

Self-sufficiency: The village should be self-sufficient in terms of its basic needs - food, clothing and other necessities. The village must import certain things that it cannot produce in the village. "We must produce more of what we can produce in exchange for what we cannot produce". The village economy should be planned with the aim of providing full employment to the village to meet its basic needs in the village itself so that it is not forced to migrate to the cities. According to Gandhiji, everyone should be Physical labour as it is necessary for moral discipline and for the healthy development of the mind and "If everyone worked for their bread, there would be enough food and enough leisure for everyone."

Industrialization: Gandhiji maintained that industrialization would help only a few and lead to concentration of economic power. Industrialization leads to passive or active exploitation of villages. It promotes competition. Large-scale production requires marketing. Marketization means profit making through an exploitation mechanism. Moreover, industrialization replaces labour and thus leads to more unemployment. To avoid this, village and cottage industries should be revived. Gandhians are not against machines. They wish to fulfil two goals: Self-

sufficiency and full employment.

Gandhi: Trusteeship: Gandhiji was not against the institution of private property. But he wanted to limit the right of private property to earn an honourable living. Gandhiji emphasised that all social property should be held in trust. Capitalists would provide not only for themselves but also for others. Some of their surplus wealth should be used for the rest of society. Gandhiji believed that such a trusteeship would improve the welfare of workers and avoid conflict between workers and employer's. Gandhiji firmly believed that land belonged to God. Hereafter land belongs to the community and must be used for the good of the community. If the landowners do not comply and continue to exploit the poor workers, they should organise non-violent struggles without cooperation and civil disobedience against them.

GANDHI: SARVODAYA

Sarvodaya is a term meaning 'Universal Ascent' or 'Progress for All.' The term was first coined by Mahatma Gandhi as the title of his translation of John Ruskin's treatise on political economy, "Unto This Last." Gandhi's ideal of Sarvodaya involves meeting the basic material, social, and spiritual needs of the poorest of the poor. Sarvodaya today is no longer a mere vision or utopia. In some circles it is seen as a dynamic philosophy that can enable the emergence of a radically transformed humanity. The current wave of globalization requires a social order and geopolitical orientation based on synergistic elements of different philosophies. In this context, the concept of Sarvodaya has gained importance. The concept of Sarvodaya forms the basis of Gandhi's economic, social and political thought. Sarvodaya can be considered as Gandhi's distinctive contribution to social philosophy.

Gandhi's ideal society is Sarvodaya, in which the betterment of all is possible. Like Marx, Gandhi envisions a socialist society free from all forms of exploitation and oppression, in which there is no government to govern the people, but the people are governed by themselves. Such an ideal society is the highest good in the development of human society, for it is the only means of solving the problems of mankind. Gandhi's social philosophy as a doctrine of such an ideal society certainly seems relevant today.

GANDHI: UNTOUCHABILITY

'My Fight against Untouchability is a Fight against Impure in Humanity'

The efforts made by Gandhi to improve the status of Harijans were thus unique in our history. Gandhi spent his time among the Harijans. He taught them the sense of cleanliness. He advised them to improve their economic and social standards through hard work and honest means her perm stand against untouchability in his thought our struggle does not end so long as there is a single human being considered untouchable on account of his birth.

Gandhi was in Nellore on April 6. He met untouchables there and prayed that day, as he do today, that if he should be born again, he might be born an untouchable, so that he might share their sorrow, suffering and insults inflicted upon them, so that he might free himself and them from this miserable condition. He prayed that if he should die with unfulfilled desires, with unfulfilled service to the 'untouchables,' with unfulfilled Hinduism, he might be reborn among the 'untouchables' to bring my Hinduism to completion.

Rural reconstruction through abolition of untouchability

Untouchability is a social evil and should not be regarded as a mere political necessity the socio-economic evils associated with this system must be abolished. According to Gandhiji, there should be complete social equality among people in society. No person or section of society should be accorded social superiority on the basis of birth, knowledge, religion or any other consideration. Gandhiji fought against all forms of social superiority and continued his crusade against the doctrine of racial superiority in South Africa and the evil practises of untouchability in India. He held that no one is born untouchable and unequal. The practise of untouchability is a sin against God, as Harijans and non-Harijans are children of the same God. He considered untouchability as the worst effect of Hinduism and advocated entry into temples for religious equality. In 1932, Gandhi introduced the Harijan Sevak Sangh, a non-political association for the self-improvement of people. He proposed that they become economically independent by introducing spinning and weaving.

GANDHI: TRUTH AND NON VIOLENCE

'Non-violence is the weapon of the strong'.

Gandhi was a great advocate of truth and non-violence. They are the two sides of the same coin. Satya comes from the word 'Sat' which means 'to exist'. So by the term "satya" Gandhi also means that which not only exists but is true-ahimsa. He explained that "Ahimsa" in its positive form means 'the greatest love, the greatest charity.' He also explained that ahimsa connects us to each other and also to God. As a utopian, he sought to "bring the kingdom of God to earth (Ram Rajya), in which truth and non-violence would be the guiding principles. Gandhi held that "killing or injury to life can be an act of violence only under certain conditions-anger, pride, hatred, selfish considerations, bad intentions and similar other considerations. Any injury to life done from these motives is 'himsa'. So the negative meaning of ahimsa is 'do not kill or do not harm', but this presupposes that a non-violent action is free from hatred, anger, malice and the like. For example, if an animal that is to die is in severe pain, we may kill it to end its suffering, or there may be cases where a woman needs to protect her dignity or owner from a criminal. In that case, she may use violence to protect herself. So, according to Gandhi, there are certain exceptions to the law of violence. We may never be strong enough to be completely nonviolent in thought, word, and deed, but we must hold nonviolence as our goal and make great strides toward it.

GANDHI: EDUCATION SYSTEM

If we want to reach real Peace in world, we should start educating children.

Gandhiji's contribution to education is unique in that he made the first attempt to develop an indigenous education system in British India. With the advent of British colonial rule in India, a foreign, imperial system of education was introduced that was at odds with India's centuries-old, unique and all-encompassing holistic system of education. It not only did irreparable damage to the Indian education system in the long run, but also created a multitude of disparities, class consciousness, and an ever-growing yearning for the Western materialistic lifestyle.

His educational philosophy is a harmonious blend of idealism, naturalism, and pragmatism. Idealism is the foundation of Gandhiji's philosophy, while naturalism and pragmatism are the helpers in putting this philosophy into practice. Therefore, he is known as practical-idealist. His nation was "Education for life, education through life and education throughout life" This definition of Mahatma Gandhi would encompass everything that can be understood by education. He believed that education was

closely linked to the socio-economic development of society. He introduced a program of basic education in which vocational training or work experience is of paramount importance. The main goal of education is the development of human personality. He developed a fourfold personality in the individual, namely body, mind, heart and spirit. True education stimulates the spiritual, intellectual and physical powers of the individual.

His view of education of the heart, which brings the idea of sympathy, fellowship and deep feelings of love. The goal of education is not only to produce a good individual, but one must also understand his own responsibility in which he lives. This is closely related to the Hindu concept of Varnashram dharma. Someone who is aware of his responsibility will attain social consciousness and social mind. Then all activities of such person will have social content and also cooperation with others. His primary information for basic education is head, heart and hand and not reading, writing and arithmetic.

Gandhi's concept of education is very relevant in today's situation. His concept of education is completely based on the development of human personality, discipline, creating handwork with learning and developing a culture of peace. He was a great educator and an individualist par excellence. He knew that education is the most important tool in society that can be used as an instrument of socio-economic progress, material advancement, political evolution and moral development of an individual.

Gandhi's entire philosophy, work and education concept was based on ethics and morality. His concept of religion is 'service to humanity'. For the spirit of religions, he proposed 'Nai Talim' or 'basic education'. This new system of education, His philosophical thought on education is an important cornerstone for the socio-economic development of society. In his view, education is not a profitable business but a sacred opportunity to serve the nation. His concept of education is not only the elimination of illiteracy, but learning through action. He preaches the doctrine of simple living and high thinking. His educational system attaches great importance to a culture of peace, sincere work, and devotion to the nation's cause, social spirit, kindness, right feelings, economic progress, physical improvement and socio-cultural progress. It is based on work-oriented education that can provide the necessary economic self-sufficiency and self-reliance of Gram Swaraj based on the philosophy of Rama rajya.

Gandhi's had spoken out clearly on the problems of the deteriorating education system, the need for craft-based education, character education, unemployment issues, student unrest, and relevant messages to students. To this day, many of these issues have not been addressed, despite several educational reforms. Similar to politics, Gandhi did not abrogate the relationship between religion and education. Rather, it was a constructive means of imparting cultural and moral values as prescribed in various texts, and the best way to practice these virtues. As moral and spiritual values have taken a back seat, educational standards as envisioned by Gandhi are on the decline. The only plausible answer seems to be a national revival of Gandhian values that would rid the system of its inherent contradiction.

CONCLUSION

Gandhi was and is highly controversial both during his lifetime and in terms of his continuing legacy and influence. There were and are critics who have viewed Gandhi as naive, utopian, escapist, negative, anarchistic, idealistic, and completely

irrelevant. In contrast, Gandhi's thoughts and actions are significant, relevant, and urgently needed to address the problems of the twenty-first century. As long as there is greed, selfishness, discord, hostility, communal riots, violence, religious unrest, and internal conflict, people will turn to Gandhi as a way of life, Ray of hope, Volcano of truth and Ahimsa and Source of Inspiration His usefulness will not end until all conflicts cease.

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